

*These guidelines are written for food DONORS. By following these guidelines, food DONORS will be able to safely prepare, handle, and provide food that can be accepted by DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS.*

## **Introduction**

Many individuals and groups (“DONORS”) provide food to organizations (“DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS”) that then serve or distribute the food to needy individuals. The distributing organizations must comply with state food safety rules (Chapter 246-215 Washington Administrative Code) and have limitations on the types and sources of food they can accept. Donors should follow these guidelines to help assure food provided to the needy is safe.

## **Definitions**

“DONOR” means a person, corporation, association, or other organization that donates food to a DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATION.

“DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATION” means a charitable nonprofit organization under section 501c of the federal Internal Revenue Code that distributes food free of charge to the public.

“DONOR KITCHEN” means a kitchen that is used by a DONOR to handle, store, or prepare food for donation to needy persons through a DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATION and which is **not** a residential kitchen in a private home.

## **Foods Suitable for Donation**

### **Home-prepared foods**

DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS are not allowed to accept or serve most types of home-prepared foods. However, homemade baked goods that do not need refrigeration to remain safe (e.g., cookies, cakes, fruit pies, and breads) may be received from DONORS.

### **Commercially packaged foods not needing refrigeration**

The donation of commercially canned, boxed, and otherwise packaged foods is encouraged.

### **Fresh produce donations**

Food donations may include fresh produce, including home-grown fruits and vegetables. Fresh produce should be protected from contamination and receive final preparation, such as washing and cutting, in a DONOR KITCHEN or licensed kitchen.

**Food prepared in a DONOR KITCHEN**

Except for baked goods (e.g., bread, cookies, and fruit pies), DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS may not accept foods prepared in a home kitchen. Instead, foods for donation should be prepared in either a DONOR KITCHEN or a commercial food establishment, such as a restaurant.

A DONOR KITCHEN is a publicly available kitchen in a faith-based organization, community center or other site. The DONOR KITCHEN does not need to have a health permit, but must have basic facilities such as adequate handwashing, dishwashing, refrigeration, and cooking equipment. It must have a safe water supply, be protected from weather and animals, and be cleaned before food preparation starts.

**Uninspected meat donations**

Meat from game animals may be donated to a charitable organization if approved by the local health agency and if donated by a law enforcement officer or a person with a valid hunting license issued by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. A meat cutter approved by the local health agency must process the game meat. The meat needs to be labeled: “UNINSPECTED WILD GAME MEAT, THOROUGHLY COOK TO 165° F INTERNAL TEMPERATURE.”

Livestock, poultry, or rabbits may be donated alive to a charitable organization if raised by a member of an approved youth club, such as 4H. A meat cutter approved by the local health authority must process the livestock, poultry, or rabbit meat. The meat needs to be labeled: “UNINSPECTED MEAT, THOROUGHLY COOK TO 165° F INTERNAL TEMPERATURE.”

**Food donation by licensed food establishments**

Licensed food establishments are encouraged to donate surplus foods to DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS. Because licensed food establishments have commercial-grade equipment, unlike many DONOR KITCHENS, these may safely include foods that have gone through typical multiple food preparation steps and handled with the same consideration for safety as the food sold to customers.

Perishable foods past the original manufacturer’s “sell by” (or “best if used by”) date are suitable for donation, but not foods past a “use by” date. Other items not suitable for donation include foods that have been temperature abused; foods that have been served to a customer’s table; spoiled foods; foods exposed to potential contamination by severe package damage; and sharply dented or rusty cans.

**Food donation by food processors**

Food processors are encouraged to donate foods that may not meet their specifications for reasons that do not affect food safety, such as package printing errors. Each food package may lack complete labeling required for commercial distribution, as long as the charitable distributing organization is given enough information to mark each container with the common name of the food. At least one accurate, complete label must be provided with each master carton.

**Distressed foods**

Foods that have been stored for a long time, gone through a fire, or suffered another disaster may still be safe. Contact the food safety program of the local health agency to see if these foods can be safely donated under the specific circumstances involved.

***Important Note:*** *Contact the DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATION you plan to donate to in order to be sure it can accept the type of food you intend to donate.*

## **Foods Unsuitable for Donation**

Certain foods are not suitable for donation because of safety concerns. These foods include:

- Home canned, vacuum-packed or pickled foods
- Foods in soiled containers
- Perishable foods past a “use by” date, unless frozen
- Foods in sharply dented or rusty cans
- Foods in opened or torn containers exposing the food to potential contamination
- Unpasteurized milk
- Foods with an “off” odor
- Foods prepared, cooked, cooled, or reheated at home (except for baked goods)

## **Safe Food Handling Practices**

### **Training**

Although training is not a requirement for preparing food donations, food safety classes explain the food safety precautions required with feeding large groups. Many local health agencies, WSU Cooperative Extension offices and food industry associations give short classes on food safety.

### **Personnel**

A knowledgeable group leader with food safety training and a Washington State Food Worker Card, if possible, should be selected to organize the food preparation efforts. Children under 10 years old should only handle wrapped foods, raw produce, and raw dry food staples to limit the potential for food safety errors. **Food workers who are ill should not handle or prepare food.**

### **Handwashing**

Proper handwashing facilities and supplies (soap, warm running water, and paper towels) must be convenient for all food handlers.

All food handlers should wash their hands before beginning work, and:

- after going to the restroom
- after coughing or sneezing into their hands
- after handling raw meat
- after eating, smoking or drinking
- after caring for children
- after hands become dirty

### **Preventing bare hand contact**

To prevent the spread of germs, it is important to keep bare hands from touching foods that will not be cooked or washed before being eaten. Utensils (e.g., forks, ladles, tongs, paper squares) or gloves can be used to prevent bare hand contact. Utensils need to be cleaned and sanitized between uses.

Food safety gloves are intended to protect the food from hand contact rather than to protect the wearer. Gloves need to be changed when they are torn or after tasks where they become soiled. A cut on the hand should be covered by a clean bandage and a glove.

### **Food storage**

Dry goods, canned food, and fresh produce may be stored in a private home away from pests, pets, and household chemicals. Commercially frozen food can be stored in a home-style freezer, as long as the food remains frozen hard. Other foods should be stored in a DONOR KITCHEN, rather than in a home.

Packaged food should be donated in its original, unopened packaging with ingredient labels. If bulk food staples such as flour, sugar, dry beans, and dry grains are repackaged for donation, the common name of the food item should be written on each container.

### Food transportation

Temperature control and prevention of cross contamination are important food safety measures while transporting food. Potentially hazardous foods that need to be kept hot or cold need to be transported quickly in insulated containers that protect against contamination. Whenever possible, prepare and cook the food at the feeding location to reduce the food safety risk.

### Potentially hazardous foods

Certain foods, called *potentially hazardous foods*, let bacteria grow quickly. It is important to keep these foods at safe temperatures to prevent bacteria from growing.

Potentially Hazardous Foods		
Proteins	Fruits and Vegetables	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meat</li> <li>▪ Poultry</li> <li>▪ Fish</li> <li>▪ Eggs</li> <li>▪ Dairy products</li> <li>▪ Tofu</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All cooked vegetables</li> <li>▪ Seed sprouts</li> <li>▪ Sliced melons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Garlic in oil mixtures</li> <li>▪ Fresh herbs in oil mixtures</li> </ul>
	<b>Cooked starches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cooked beans, rice and potatoes</li> </ul>	

### Temperature danger zone

*Potentially hazardous foods* must be kept out of the *danger zone* (41° F - 140° F) for safety. A safe guideline is to make sure that food is not in the *danger zone* for more than 4 hours during all steps of handling, transportation, and serving. Foods should be discarded after 4 hours in the danger zone. Cook foods at the feeding site and serve them immediately, rather than cool the foods to reheat later.

Avoid cooling foods in a DONOR KITCHEN for later reheating. DONOR KITCHENS usually lack commercial-grade refrigeration capable of rapidly cooling large batches of food.

### Cooking temperatures

Animal foods need to be cooked until well done. Using a metal stem thermometer to measure the middle of the food is the best way to determine complete cooking.

These final cooking temperatures are recommended by the USDA:

Food Item	Temperature
Eggs	145° F (or until firm)
Seafood	145° F
Beef	145° F
Hamburger	160° F
Pork	160° F
Ground poultry	165° F
Casseroles, poultry stuffing	165° F
Whole poultry	180° F

## **Dishwashing**

Dishes need to be washed and sanitized between uses. An automatic dishwasher with a 155°F sanitizing cycle may be used. If dishes are cleaned by hand, a three-step process using three different basins should be used to (Basin 1) wash with detergent; (Basin 2) rinse off the detergent; and (Basin 3) sanitize. To make a sanitizer, mix one teaspoon of unscented chlorine bleach in one gallon of water. Dishes should be allowed to soak in the sanitizer for at least 30 seconds and allowed to air-dry after the sanitizing step.

## **Cross contamination**

Cross contamination is when germs from raw foods are spread to other foods. Common causes of cross contamination include food worker hands; raw meats or poultry that drip on other foods; and countertops and cutting boards that are not properly cleaned between uses.

To prevent cross contamination:

- Store raw meats below other foods.
- Store raw produce away from washed, ready-to-eat produce.
- Thoroughly wash and sanitize surfaces that have touched raw meats and poultry.  
(See “Dishwashing” section above.)
- Wash hands often, especially after handling raw meats.

## **Allergies**

Many people have food allergies that can cause severe reaction. Common causes of allergic reactions are peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, soy, wheat, seafood, and milk products. To help protect the safety of food recipients, it is best to provide the DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATION a list of all the ingredients in any food you prepare. Maintain original labels on donated commercially packaged foods. If bulk food staples (e.g., flour, sugar, dry beans, dry grains) are repackaged for donation, the common name of the food should be written on each package.

## **DONOR information**

DONORS will need to be prepared to provide the DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATION that receives the food the following information, either verbally or in writing:

- The source of the food
- How the food was kept free from contamination during storage, preparation and transport
- How, where, and when the food was prepared
- How the food was kept hot or cold
- How long the food was kept in the temperature *danger zone*
- The common name of a dry food staple, if repacked from the original container

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

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Visit the Department of Health web site at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/food.htm>.

Contact your local health jurisdiction for additional specific advice on donating food safely.

Local WSU Cooperative Extension offices are also good sources of information about food safety.

For more information or additional copies contact: 1-360-236-3385. The Department of Health is an equal opportunity agency. If you need this publication in an alternative format, please call 1-800-525-0127 (voice) or 1-800-833-6388 (TTY relay service).